United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council, in Presidential statement, condemns killing of seven UNOSOM II soldiers on Monday; expresses concern at deteriorating security situation in Somalia; says international support for country depends on progress towards reconciliation.

+ Security Council urges parties in Burundi to resolve political differences during current negotiations; expresses alarm at humanitarian crisis, and concern at attacks against foreigners.

+ Spain to hold Security Council Presidency in September following suspension of provisional rule of procedure.

+ High Commissioner for Human Rights to send 26 rights specialists to Rwanda within one week; envisages 147-strong deployment by end of September.

+ Special Representative Khan says Rwandan refugee exodus to Bukavu has ended, but would-be returnees are being intimidated; Department of Peace-keeping Operations draws up de-mining plan for Rwanda.

+ Under-Secretary-General Hansen appeals to de facto authorities in Haiti to release 10,000 barrels of fuel needed for humanitarian operations.

+ Secretary-General recommends that General Assembly appropriate $12.4 million for ONUSAL for period 1 June to 30 November; puts cost of liquidating mission at $2.7 million for three months.

+ Fifth Committee approves draft by which General Assembly would authorize Secretary-General to commit $37 million for UNAMIR for the period 5 April to 30 September.

+ General Assembly President begins official visit to Malaysia; to visit Viet Nam, India and United Kingdom over next two weeks.

(more)

For information media--not an official record

+ Special Mission to Afghanistan reports some progress after in-depth consultations with various parties; promotes broad-based participation in peace process.

+ WFP resumes relief flights to Malanje, Angola, after 12-week suspension due to lack of security clearances.

+ Fish Stocks Conference considers draft agreement on conservation measures and sustainable exploitation of high seas fisheries.

+ Compensation Commission assesses Kuwait Oil Company claim for $950 million to cover cost of extinguishing fires set by Iraqi forces in 1991.

+ Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination discusses new international economic order and human rights, discrimination against women, and economic, social and cultural rights.

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The Security Council has strongly condemned the killing on Monday of seven Indian soldiers serving with the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II). In a statement read out by its President, Yuliy Vorontsov (Russian Federation), the Council said it was appalled at the attack on the peace-keepers, who had been supporting international humanitarian efforts. It expressed grave concern at the deteriorating security situation in Somalia, and at the lack of progress towards reconciliation among the Somali factions. It attached great importance to an accelerated inter-clan reconciliation, particularly among the Hawiye sub-clan.

The Council said it was particularly concerned that the national reconciliation conference, to which the signatories of the Addis Ababa Agreement had agreed and which was scheduled for 15 May, had not taken place. It stressed that international support for Somalia, and the continuing presence of UNOSOM II, depended very much on the resolve of the Somali parties to achieve political compromise. The Council reminded the parties that Somalia's future lay in their hands, and urged them to make every effort to advance the reconciliation process.

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The Security Council today welcomed ongoing negotiations in Burundi aimed at reaching an early agreement on presidential succession, overcoming the constitutional crisis, and establishing stable democratic institutions. It urged all parties to display maximum political will to resolve existing differences by the scheduled date of 26 August. In a statement by its President, Yuliy Vorontsov (Russian Federation), the Council deplored any attempts to block progress towards a political settlement, which was essential for stability in Burundi. It called on the parties to reject any undemocratic or extremist solutions in the settlement of their political differences.

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Impunity from justice was one of the most serious security-related problems in Burundi, according to the Council. It attached importance to the strengthening of the national judicial system, and to the deployment of civilian observers to monitor the establishment of a more stable environment.

The Council expressed alarm at the extent of the humanitarian crisis in Burundi, and concern at attacks against foreigners there. It called on the authorities and all parties to provide security for international personnel. The Council encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to closely review ways to promote humanitarian efforts and national reconciliation in Burundi. It also encouraged the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and Member States to redouble their efforts in that regard.

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The Security Council today decided to suspend the operation of rule 18 of its provisional rules of procedure so as to allow the Council Presidency to be held by Spain next month. The Council announced that decision in a statement read out by its President, Yuliy Vorontsov (Russian Federation). It said the timing of the Presidency by Rwanda would be addressed later.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala Lasso, has said he will send 26 officials to Rwanda before the end of the month to work in the human rights sector there. He made that announcement in Geneva today, having just returned from a visit to Africa, according to a United Nations spokesman. The officials are being deployed in order to create confidence, to cooperate with investigations by the Special Rapporteur and the Commission of Experts, and to represent the Office of the High Commissioner with regard to technical matters.

Mr. Ayala Lasso said 147 officials would be sent to Rwanda by the end of September. The initiative would cost $12 million for 6 months, in addition to the $2.1 million sought in his appeal on 2 August.

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Special Representative Shahryar Khan today reported that the exodus of Rwandan refugees to Bukavu, Zaire, had been brought under control. He said that fewer people were moving towards the Zairean border, and that people who had been preparing to flee were now staying put. Meanwhile, there were substantial population movements in the direction of Kigali.

However, intimidation was continuing to be a problem in refugee camps, according to a United Nations spokesman. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) yesterday aborted an attempt to repatriate 300 former civil servants and their families from Zaire after an attack on their convoy resulted in several casualties.

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The spokesman said that minefields -- many unmarked -- were a major problem in Rwanda, and that two children a day were being killed by mines or booby-traps. The Department of Peace-keeping Operations had sent a mission to the country last week and had drawn up a comprehensive de-mining plan.

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The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Peter Hansen, today appealed to the de facto authorities in Haiti to release a shipment of 10,000 barrels of fuel for use in humanitarian operations. The shipment has been held under seal since its arrival in Port-au-Prince on 21 July, despite the completion of all normal formalities.

Mr. Hansen noted that the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) provided fuel for over 300 humanitarian organizations in Haiti. Those organizations were feeding more than 1 million people and supplying drugs to 520 health institutions. Failure to release the fuel would cause humanitarian operations to grind to a halt, with serious implications for the population at large and the poorest in particular.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the General Assembly appropriate almost $12.4 million gross to cover the operation of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) for the period 1 June to 30 November. That figure includes the $3.9 million authorized by Assembly resolution 48/243 and the $4.9 million provided under the terms of resolution 48/299 on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 1994-1995.

In a report to the Assembly dated 27 July, the Secretary-General also recommended authorization of $2.7 million for the liquidation of ONUSAL for the period 1 December 1994 to 28 February 1995.

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The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) today approved a draft decision by which the General Assembly would authorize the Secretary-General to commit $37 million gross for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) for the period 5 April to 30 September. That authorization would be in addition to the $62 million already authorized for the period 5 April to 31 October.

The Committee also approved a draft decision by which the Assembly would defer to its next session a decision on the establishment of an ad hoc body to study the principle of capacity to pay as the fundamental criteria in determining the scale of assessments.

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General Assembly President S.R. Insanally (Guyana) has begun an official visit to Malaysia with a courtesy call on Foreign Minister Haji Ahmad Badawi.

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Tomorrow, he will call on Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, and will address the United Nations Malaysia Association (UNMA).

The President will leave Malaysia on Sunday for an official visit to Viet Nam, where he will have meetings with the Prime Minister, Vice-Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. On Wednesday, he will travel to India, where he will call on the President and Prime Minister. On his way back from India, the President will stop in London to address a forum on "Family in Focus", in connection with the International Year of the Family. He is scheduled to return to New York on 8 September.

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The United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan has undertaken a series of in-depth consultations with various Afghan parties and found a convergence of views on a number of issues, including the need for a viable transitional authority to run the country in the interim period. The consultations also addressed the holding of a preliminary meeting with the parties involved in the current conflict, and the three neutral parties. The head of the Mission, Mahmoud Mestiri, said such a meeting would be a first step towards broad-based participation in the peace process. He added that efforts in that regard had been fruitful.

Ambassador Mestiri reiterated the Mission's commitment to pursuing peace through negotiations with the parties, with the active participation of representatives of the Afghan people. The Mission would continue its work on the assumption that the people desired peace, and expected the full cooperation of all concerned.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) has resumed relief flights to Malanje, Angola, after a 12-week suspension due to a lack of security clearances. Six flights delivered 102 metric tons of food on Wednesday, and seven flights with 119 tonnes of food were scheduled to arrive yesterday.

The WFP stopped flying to Malanje on 18 May, resulting in soaring malnutrition rates and deaths from starvation. The city is surrounded by minefields that prevent farming, and is totally dependent on airlifted food. In May, the Programme was feeding some 200,000 people in Malanje.

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The United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks today began considering a 47-article draft agreement on conservation measures and terms for the sustainable exploitation of high seas fisheries. The Conference has a mandate from the General Assembly to solve problems relating to overfishing and depletion of global fish stocks. The draft outlines ways to implement related provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which enters into force 16 November.

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The European Union said that although the draft agreement attempted to address the rights and obligations of both coastal States and States fishing on the high seas, many substantive issues remained to be solved. Since reaching a consensus could take some time, it called for regional cooperation to facilitate implementation of conservation and management measures in the immediate future. Japan said that there was no consensus on the form of the final instrument, and that it had participated in the work of the Conference under the assumption that the agreement would not be binding.

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The Compensation Commission set up by the Security Council to review claims resulting from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is preparing a preliminary assessment of a claim filed by the Kuwait Oil Company. The Company is seeking more than $950 million to cover the cost of extinguishing hundreds of oil fires set by retreating Iraqi forces.

Because of the economic, environmental and health effects of the fires, the Commission has decided to appoint a separate panel to examine the claim and to make recommendations to the Governing Council. The panel will start work as soon as possible, in view of the importance and symbolism of the claim for Kuwait.

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The Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities this week began discussing a new international economic order and the promotion of human rights; prevention of discrimination against women; and the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. Two studies commissioned by the Subcommission -- on states of emergency and on the effects of extreme poverty on human rights -- were presented on Tuesday.

On Monday, the Chairperson/Rapporteur of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, Erica-Irene Daes, presented a draft international declaration proclaiming the rights and unique values of indigenous peoples. Calling for its adoption, she said any proposed delay must be weighed against the destruction of human life and ecosystems that another year would bring. The draft's claims for self-determination and territorial rights -- which had drawn some opposition from Governments -- were universal rights which could not be denied to indigenous peoples.

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